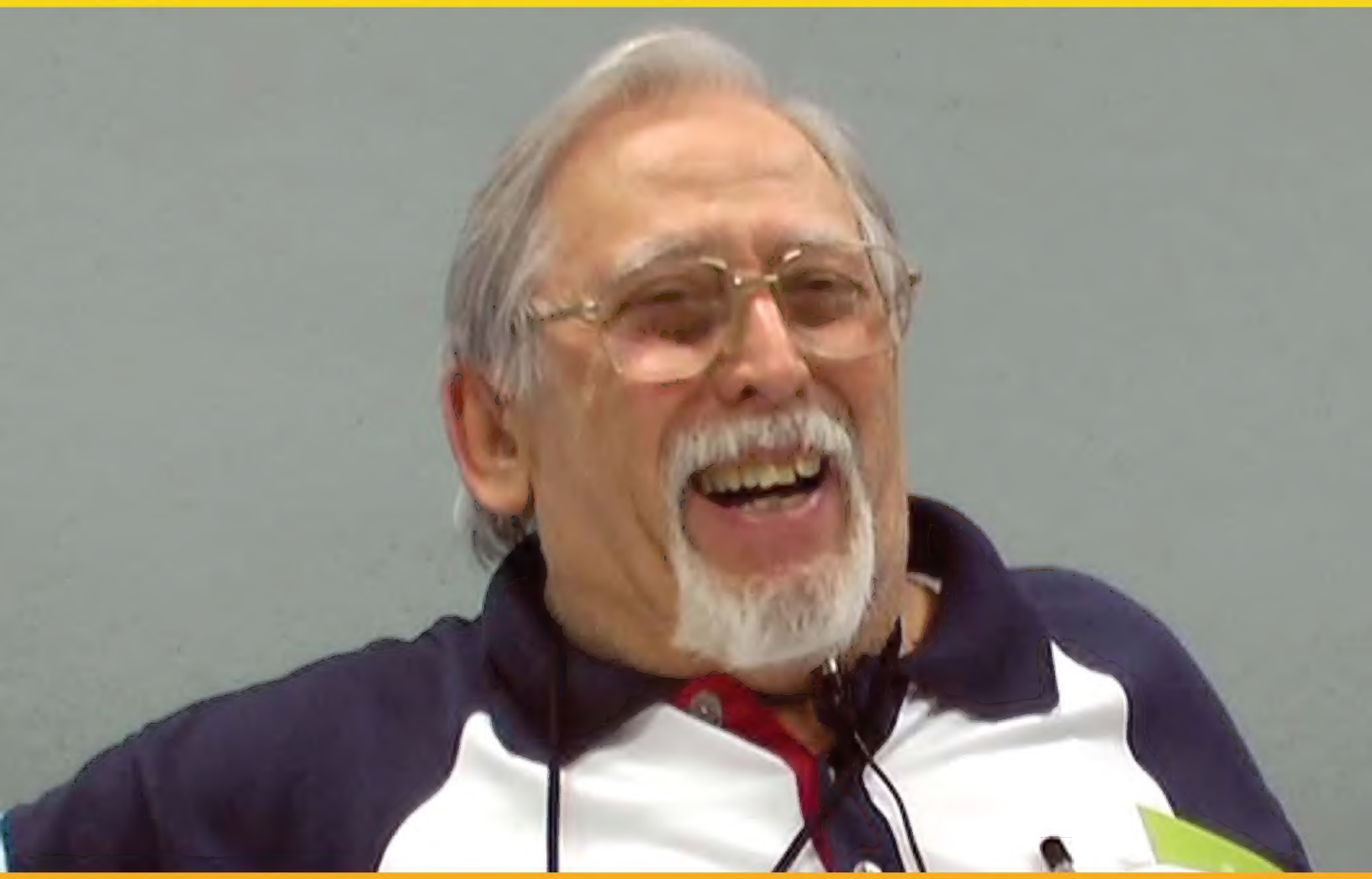
Comic Fandom Quarterly

#8 Q4 2016 $9.95

Dick Giordano Interview!



From Batman to Gotham: 50 Years of Comic Book TV Heroes

Part Two of A Three Part Series

Jef Parker and the Beginning of Collector's Edge Comics Part 2: Chet's Variety Store and the Burnham Bowl

I had this small handful of comics that I had been reading off-and-on for a few of my younger years, and when I got to be about 10 years old or so and my reading comprehension was higher, I decided to try to seek out more of them. I knew about comics on the newsstands, so that is where I started, but I also found another good avenue at dime stores and K-Mart: pre-pack comics. These 3-for-a-price ($1 for a long time) were great sources of semi-recent (usually within the past year or so) comics. However as anyone who collected them knows, figuring out the middle comic was a challenge, and they rarely if ever had consecutive issues. I needed some better options.

Prior to the 80s, the only place to get back issue comics were at bookstores along with novelty shops and sometimes thrift stores. Many of these had scattershot supply, rarely runs or complete series, and usually in well-worn condition. Once the price guide had come out in the 70s and the "value" of comics was being established and understood - based in part on their condition, scarcity or key issue nature – things got a bit more organized, and back issues were somewhat easier to locate. Deep runs were still rare for a while though,

At one of these bookstores, I was finally able to locate some nice chunks of several series I was interested in. *Justice League of America* and the *Superman* books were my main focus at this time. I had located most of them from the 20 cent price onwards, and was looking to fill holes and see about older issues. Many of the prices were out of my range then, given that my allowance was only a couple of dollars a week and had to fund all my interests, but I was able to start building things this way for a while. But they only carried older back issues, and had little to no recent comics.

Into this environment shops dedicated to just comic books began to appear. I had heard of such places existing around the city, but they were too far away to go seek out. "Far away" in this case meaning less than a mile or two that I could bike or bus within an hour or so. This limited me to primarily my immediate neighborhood and surrounding area, and the only place that had comics within that sphere was Chet's Variety Store on Kinnickinnic avenue.

Chet's Variety Store

The store itself would be forever referred to as just "Chet's," but it was actually a variety store that specialized in inexpensive and simple magic tricks, comics, and a few other odds and ends. The proprietor was a slender named Chester F. Kumelski, but to everyone he was simply Chet. Chet resembled the great character actor William Hickey (from the *Christmas Vacation* movies) in that he was slender, had that slightly thinned out voice, and tended to talk with a slight lilt. He was an interesting character and a pretty nice guy.

Chet was a wonderful character. Old by my eyes but actually in his mid-50s then, he was always observing and would share tidbits of wisdom and information with his patrons. He was always sharing something, about comics, about how collecting worked, and about magic tricks. He seemed to have a desire to pass on what he knew as he saw it, and I was always grateful to him for giving me a better understanding of comics, their history, and what collecting was all about.

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Editor and Publisher: *Robin Dale*
Comic Fandom Quarterly logo designed by *Arlen Schumer*

Coming Soon
CFQ #9 - Comic Book TV Shows Part 3!

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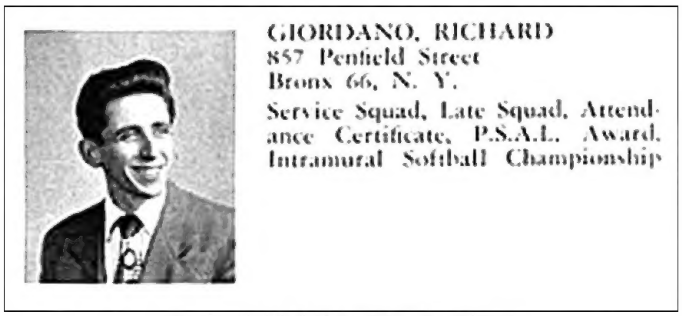
Robin Dale: Ok we're here with Dick Giordano, am I saying that correct?

Dick Giordano: That's correct.

RD: Great, that's always a big thing with everybody in the industry, is some of the names, make sure you get them right now.

DG: Well what it is is, my name starts with G-I because there's no "J" sound in the Italian alphabet, so G-I sounds like "J," like "Giuseppe," Ok? And my family really comes, somewhere way, way, back, from the river Jordan, that's where the name comes from. But to get that out of the way, it's "Gee-OR-Dano" for everyone who wants to know.

RD: OK great, that's great! All right so you've obviously been doing this for a very long time. Well let's back up to where you got started with just art in general.


GIORDANO, RICHARD
857 Penfield Street
Bronx 66, N. Y.
Service Squad, Late Squad, Attendance Certificate, P.S.A.L. Award, Intramural Softball Championship

Giordano's High School Yearbook Photo

DG: Actually I got started when I was seven years old. Well what it was is that I was very ill as a child, I spent a lot of time in bed. My father used to bring me home Famous Funnies of course, and would read me the funnies to keep me occupied. After a while I started reading myself. 99 percent of the people in this business who are my age, or close to it, will tell you, as I will, that I learned to read from reading comics. The first comics that I read were newspaper strips. It's actually what I had hoped to get in to. I used to copy the Sunday funnies because that's what I had available to me, and I always wanted to do a comic strip. Unfortunately by the time my skill level was at that level, comic strips were a dead business and I could make more money doing comic books, which is how I ended up doing comic books.

My approach to comics is more Milton Caniff and Leonard Starr, than it is Jack Kirby. I don't have the demandments of the superheroes that work today. Anyway when I was seven I started drawing comic books seriously for myself, decided that's what I wanted to do for living. I went to the School of Industrial Arts which is a high school in New York City. Again most of the people my age and thereabouts will tell you the same thing. Neal Adams went there, Joe Kubert went there, you know everybody went to the School of Industrial Arts. And I learned a lot there. I didn't take a cartooning course, they warned me against it, but that's what I did in my spare time when I wasn't going drawing handbags (laughter) or illustrations for stories, I was drawing comic book stuff.

When I left school actually I was planning on getting into advertising, I'd been roaming, but I accidentally walked into a place where a comic book writer was working and he saw my samples and sent me to Jerry Iger. There's where I started my comic career. Only nine months but I learned a lot. Jerry Iger was one of the sweat-shops - I can't think of another way to call them, they were sweat-shops - that prevailed in the Tri-State area, some were in Connecticut, some were in Jersey, most were in New York. Comic publishers of that time didn't really want to produce art for themselves, they didn't want to hire artists and writers, they wanted to buy finished work from the sweat-shops. But that went out almost as soon as I left Iger, that was 1952 I think. I started working at Charlton, I worked there from '52 to '53 in one capacity or another, and at the end as their Editor in Chief, and then left there at '67 to go work for DC, working 'the bigs.'

It was an amazing transition going from a small town like the one Charlton was located in, where they only thought about saving money as opposed to doing the work right. Moving in to DC, I had all of the skill levels that I had developed at Charlton, because you had to, it was like flying upside down there, you had no help. I had this whole production department and editorial department to support me, like easy work by comparison! Let me give you an example. I had eight bi-monthly titles when I got to DC to edit, and at

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES
SURPRISE PACKAGE!!
NO ONE IN SIGHT...JUST ME AND THE GUARD CARRYING WHAT I'VE COME TO GET! NOW'S THE TIME TO STRIKE!
H-HEY! WHAT'RE YOU... ARGHHH!!
SECRET WEAPONS KEEP OUT!
DICK GIORDANO
YOU! WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE?
I...I'VE BEEN SPOTTED! GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE...HAVE TO RUN FOR IT! IF I CAN GET TO THE CAR I MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE TO MAKE MY GETAWAY!
T-THIS PACKAGE...IT MAY SAVE MY LIFE! THOSE GUARDS KNOW HOW DEADLY IT IS... THEY'RE SCARED TO DEATH OF HITTING ME OR HAVING ME DROP THE BUNDLE! THOSE ARE JUST WARNING SHOTS TO SCARE ME!

Strange Suspense Stories #19

Charlton I had 34 bi-monthly titles. Plus I was in the factory so I was scheduling those 34 titles through engraving and printing, learned stuff nobody knew in those days.

RD: The whole production process.

DG: It was a worthwhile experience. DC was more fun though, ultimately because they had the money to back it up, they did care about the results. It wasn't that I had, I guess it's too strong to say that I had disagreements with some people there, but we were not on the same page. As a result of - nobody's fault actually - and DC Comics changed hands at that time, so we went from a mom and pop store essentially, but Carmine [Infantino] hired me with Carmine being the art director, and then that was thrown all out the window. I was working for different people and we didn't see things eye-to-eye and I left in probably 1970 and then started working then with Neal Adams at Continuity Associates.

We took over the studio of one of our clients actually, they were moving to bigger quarters and they had a floor on 48th Street, a small building but they filled the whole floor. We took it over room by room as they moved out, and started Continuity. We did everything at Continuity. We did storyboards, we did motion boards, we did some comic book work. We were doing very well. Neal spent some time during that period, you may be familiar with this, trying to help [Superman creators] Siegel and Shuster get their retirement money, he spent a lot of time on that. We got to the point where we were having a little trouble generating revenue I decided to take a month off so they didn't have to pay my salary, and I found that I liked having the month off (laughter). I really didn't want to work there anymore because I lived in Connecticut by that time and it was a hassle to drive in to New York at the time - well I didn't drive, I took the train.

Unusual Tales #24

But the problem was not Neal and not Continuity but advertising. I really couldn't think of a another way to have mom and pop and the kids sitting down at the breakfast table to eat some cereal. If you've done that once or twice there no other way to do it, you know? It didn't suit my lifestyle because I was very organized. I got up at four o'clock in the morning and I was home by seven, I had a light dinner, went to sleep and got up at four o'clock in the morning. Advertising agencies used to call you at four o'clock

and wanted the work the next morning. Neal was up for that, he was a night boy. I wasn't, so I wasn't helping as much as I could. I took off at five o'clock and wanted to catch a train to be home by seven, you know? It worked out OK on a personal level, Neal and I are still good buds and as a matter of fact we recently did a cover together, the first work we did together in many years, a book that I did for somebody else, and we talked Neal into providing the cover for it. He did a great job.

CONFIDENTIAL DIARY
MARCH
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
CATHY, WAIT... I DIDN'T MEAN...
WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN...I THOUGHT HE WANTED TO MARRY ME!
featuring
"LOOKS ARE DECEIVING"

Confidential Diary #17

So from DC then I left, went to Continuity, and time passed and I came back to DC in 1980, that was a 10 year gap there. I was working for them as a freelance artist instead of on staff, came back on staff in 1980. Paul Levitz, another good friend of mine, was...harassing me (laughter) it was pleasant, and they put together a very nice deal for me. DC is a very well structured company, a better structured company, in my humble opinion, than Marvel. They don't sell as many books as Marvel, but they have a better internal structure. There's a lot of support systems built-in. I spent the next 13 years there, from '80 to '93. Might still be there is my wife hadn't passed away in '93. I thought, why am I going through all of this, for a good retirement for me? I don't need the retirement I was trying to put together. I was getting paid very well, and 13 years of getting up and taking a every day to go into New York from Connecticut was getting to be a hassle. So I moved to Florida, and I've been freelancing here ever since. So from '93 to now [2008] that makes 15 years.

I freelanced for, oh a large number of companies: Marvel, DC are of course at the top of the list, Valiant for a while. And I'm still doing that. Patty is my business manager, she runs my studio. I have a studio outside the house, that's for business, and I have a studio at home for when I'm too lazy to go in to sit down and draw. And Rob Jones is my art assistant and computer maven. I know computers are necessary in today's business, it's unavoidable. But I'm a nerd (laughter) when it comes to computers, I don't know anything about them. So it was a good thing that I found somebody who could draw, which Rob definitely can do and he helps me with art, backgrounds or whatever, and also take care of scanning my work. For a publisher these days that's the easiest way to get this stuff out. And scanning it to the various websites that I am involved in.

RD: It's amazing the things we have technologically now that didn't exist years ago and the way people had to do things then, because back then you would take the original art and you would *mail it* through the post office! These days people would be terrified to do that!

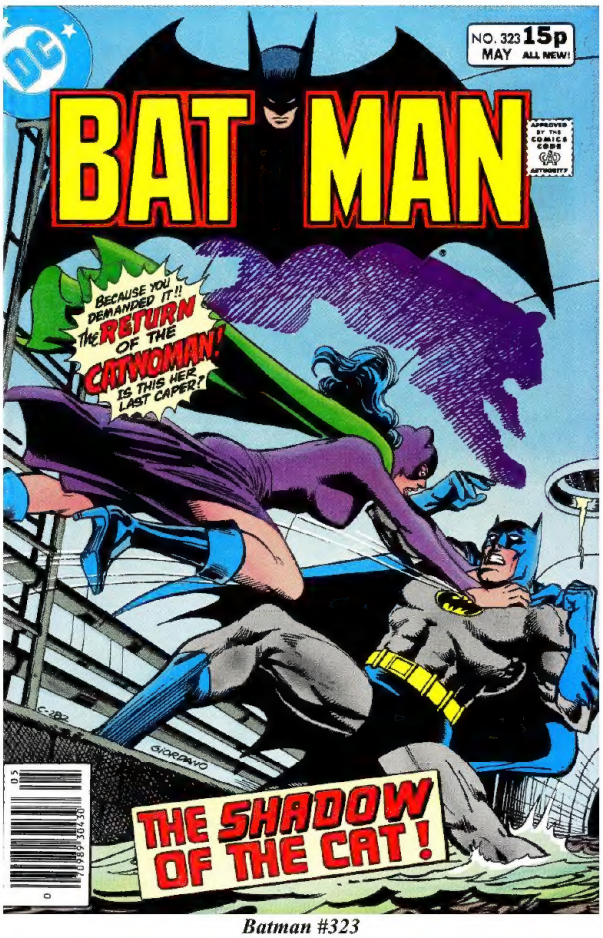
40TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
NO. 484 JUNE
35¢
SUPERMAN'S
ACTION COMICS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ACTION COMICS
IN THE FIRST ISSUE OF ACTION, SUPERMAN DID THIS ASTOUNDING FEAT...
DAILY STAR
NOW, IN THIS EXTRA-LENGTH ANNIVERSARY STORY, HE PERFORMS HIS MOST SENSATIONAL FEAT!
SUPERMAN TAKES A WIFE!

Action Comics #484

DG: Well I mean that's all there was. I had a studio in Connecticut and I had a box so that somebody wouldn't be walking through the streets with my artwork. I used to mail from the post office directly rather than putting it in a mailbox. And parcel post, special delivery was - I'm talking about 50s, 60s now - was the only way to get this stuff to your client. Or walk it or drive it down yourself. Now the computer does some of that. I get my reference by computer, specific reference. DC's licensing department wants me to do some artwork for a client, they send me the characters I have to draw by scanning it and getting it through email. Everything I do comes from a computer right now. My assignments come from a computer, my scripts, everything does.

RD: Wouldn't that have been nice to have years ago?

DG: it's nice and pleasant, it's nice not to have to go out. On the other hand I kind of miss rubbing elbows with people, but now that I'm a little older and not


NO. 323 15p
MAY ALL NEW!
BAT MAN
BECAUSE YOU DEMANDED IT!! THE RETURN OF THE CATWOMAN!
IS THIS HER LAST CAPER?
THE SHADOW OF THE CAT!

Batman #323

quite as healthy as I'd like to be. But I get by (laughter), I do what I want to do. One of the things, if I may digress a bit: when I started working in this business and I wanted to do comic strips rather than comic books. Much of the comic book assignments that I had were very similar to comic strips. There were no superheroes. I didn't do my first superhero until I was in the business for 20 years or something like that. So I did romance, I did western, I did detective stories. I did all of the kind of things that were prevalent in the newspaper syndicate strips, so I was preparing myself for that you know? Then along came EC Comics and they blew my mind away with good stories and great artwork in eight page segments, and I thought "Gee, that's what I really want to do" and by that time it was clear that I couldn't

DELL
COLLECTOR'S ISSUE
12¢
12-573-512
OCT.—DEC.
NUKLA
THE FIRST ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURE OF THE GREATEST SUPER HERO ON EARTH!
READ THE EXCITING ORIGIN OF NUKLA!
HOW DID HE COME TO BE... AND HOW WILL HIS POWERS HELP HIM AGAINST
THE EVILEST MAN IN THE WORLD?

Nukla #1

do comic strip work anymore. Nobody reads the same newspaper every day, save the editors, they know better than I did.

So the newspaper strips died, and you'd be hard pressed to find an adventure strip today. I think The Phantom is still running somewhere, not in any of the papers I read. I guess I was glad I pulled out of that. I was working, maybe it wasn't 20 years, maybe it was 15, I was working at Dell and they came up with the idea of a character named Nukla, who was an atomic powered strip with a skintight suit and some powers. That was my first shot at doing a superhero. Even when I went up to DC in '67, of the eight titles I had only two of them were superheroes and they were band new: *Beware The Creeper* and *The Hawk And The Dove*. Everything else was either westerns, or romance, or horror, the same things I had been dealing with all my life. It wasn't until I came back in the 80s that everything was gone but super heroes. With the exception of Vertigo, which was a little later on.

Vertigo was the exception. DC did some marketing research and found out that there's older readers and they're not at conventions, they're just readers. And we were able to get movie advertisements and record advertisements because the market research showed that we had a different audience for that group, and they were able to get by with that. But I wish I could go back to doing romance and westerns and all of those things again. I'm not doing that now, but I'm not

IN A COMIC ALL THEIR OWN AT LAST...
NO. 259 JAN. 40¢ ALL NEW!
LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
THERE GOES SUPERBOY---FLYING BACK TO HIS OWN TIME ERA--AND THIS TIME HE'LL NEVER RETURN!
GIORDANO
SUPERBOY LEAVING THE LEGION!? IS THIS THE TRAGIC AFTERMATH TO THE... 'PSYCHO WAR'?

Legion of Super-Heroes #259

doing superheroes very often either. Most of my clients produce comic books that are below the radar. A lot of them think I'm retired because they don't see too much of what I'm doing, but if you go on Bob Layton's website you'll find a five page monthly web comic that we've been doing for several months now, I just did page 100 before I came down here. I'm also doing a web comic, well web to print really, they're doing it web first, then print, for Comic Mix. Mike Gold is the guy in charge there and I just finished page 72 of that project with another 30 pages or so to go. And commissions filling in between, and odds and ends stuff that I pick up here and there.

I'm doing a *Captain Action* cover for Moonstone, because I worked on the first *Captain Action*, and the price was reasonable. I worked for a religious outfit for a while, we did a 64 page book or something like that, religious scene but not heavy hitting you over the head. I did a completely non-religious thing for an Italian publisher, sex and violence! Fortunately for me, they never finished it and never published it. I did get paid for something like 40 pages, so that was ok. I did a single page for two of the people that used to work for me at DC actually. Not for Sony but one of the high tech companies. They do a weekly strip, I just did one week, because it was an old time romance comic book. If you say if often enough people will remember that that's what you wanted to do, and when the job comes up it's "Oh! Get Dick!" he wants to do this stuff. Networking helps (laughter).

I don't enjoy commissions as much as doing comic book stuff, because that's more like illustration, and I think of myself as a storyteller. I was never keen on covers for example. I did them, a lot of them, when I was asked to, but those weren't my favorite things to do.

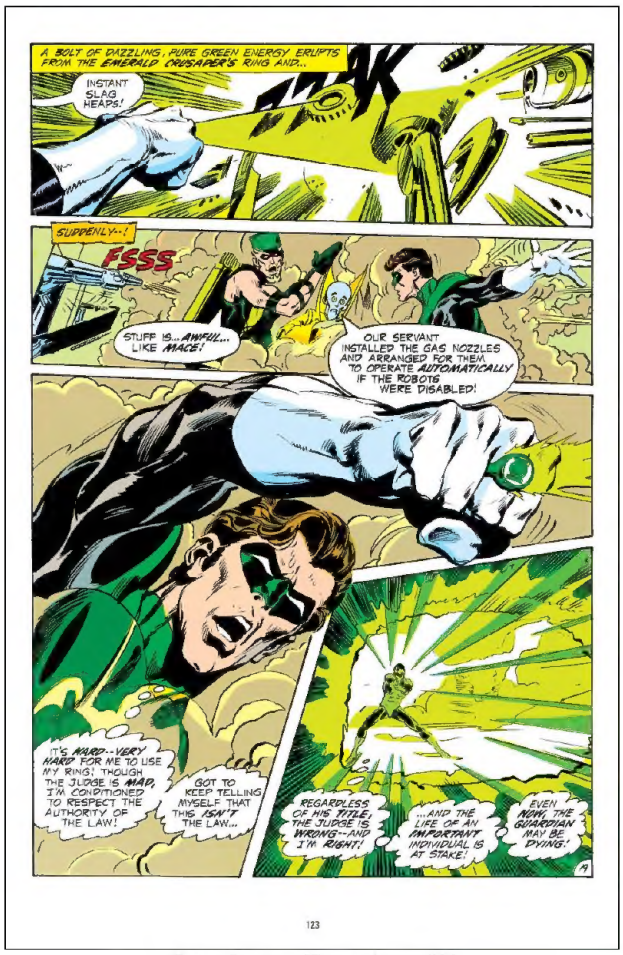
RD: But you did a lot of them, and I'm guessing that you mostly did covers at the time because you were doing the editing. You were an editor, and all you could really afford time for was doing covers, is that pretty fair?

DG: No, I did a lot of covers before I became an editor at DC. I did a whole string of *Legion of Super-Heroes*, maybe 30 covers in a row, before I became an editor. But my being available there during the day, and not only available physically, but that the

Captain Action #3

terms of my employment was that they were not to ask me to stop freelancing. I would continue to freelance for them, nobody else, but I wanted to keep doing that. So when Joe Orlando needed something, he'd come to my office, get it the next morning maybe because I used to get up at four o'clock. And I got a lot of work that way by being available. I have a huge body of work with DC. I don't really remember it all until I come to a convention and people bring up books for me to sign. I don't remember doing that, but I'll sign it (laughter).

It all worked out pretty well. DC is very organized when it comes to paying for reprints and royalties and things like that. A whole mess of my work, since I have such a large body of it, has been reprinted already, and there's still a lot to go. I get a large


A BOLT OF DAZZLING, PURE GREEN ENERGY ERUPTS FROM THE EMERALD CRUSADER'S RING AND..
INSTANT SLAG HEAPS!
SUDDENLY--!
FSSS
STUFF IS...AWFUL... LIKE MACE!
OUR SERVANT INSTALLED THE GAS NOZZLES AND ARRANGED FOR THEM TO OPERATE AUTOMATICALLY IF THE ROBOTS WERE DISABLED!
IT'S HARD--VERY HARD FOR ME TO USE MY RING, THOUGH THE JUDGE IS MAD, I'M CONDITIONED TO RESPECT THE AUTHORITY OF THE LAW!
GOT TO KEEP TELLING MYSELF THAT THIS ISN'T THE LAW...
REGARDLESS OF HIS TITLE, THE JUDGE IS WRONG--AND I'M RIGHT!
...AND THE LIFE OF AN IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL IS AT STAKE!
EVEN NOW, THE GUARDIAN MAY BE DYING!
123

Green Lantern/Green Arrow #80

amount of money each year from reprints and royalties on those, and foreign sales. They pay me for everything, not only me, everybody. Neal Adams told me that was Marvel's attitude before they went bankrupt and the business people took over. But DC's attitude is that we have to be fair and honest with the freelancers, and Marvel's attitude is "me first." The executives there don't care too much about the freelancers, they think we are expendable, interchangeable. In a way we are, because with things being so bad, we take whatever comes up, and you do whatever you have to do. If you find the right editor, I did on *Dracula*. We had a great editor over there, an editor who can save you from the heartbreak (laughter). He took care of the artwork, he took care of - because it had to go in, it was a different kind of artwork. He took care of getting me the royalties and the reprint fees and all of that. If you have the right editor you can get by anywhere.

RD: Would you mind talking a little bit about working with Neal, particularly on like the *Green Lantern* run? What was it like to ink Neal's work?

DG: Well I think it was actually perfect for the business, because Neal and I had different skills entirely. Not only that he penciled and I inked, but I had better business sense. Patty and I - Patty used to work up there with me, that's where we met - used to handle the business end of it. We used to talk to the accountants and the lawyers and the clients. We used to do the billing, we used to figure out who got paid what. Neal was the artist in the company, he was

IT'S FILLED WITH BLANKS!
YEAH...IT'S A FRAME! WHILE PISTOL-PETE WAS BLASTING THE SENATOR WITH BLANKS, THE REAL KILLING WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE PLACE IN THE PARKING LOT!
THAT WAY, IT LOOKS LIKE THE BLACKS ARE ON A RAMPAGE...AND CLUTCHER IS EVERYBODY'S HERO!
THEN CLUTCHER WALTZES INTO THE PRESIDENCY, AND PRETTY SOON THIS COUNTRY IS RIPPED APART... WITH CIVIL WAR!
CLUTCHER... YOU'RE BENEATH CONTEMPT! I'M CERTAIN YOUR COLLEAGUES IN CONGRESS WILL BOUNCE YOU WHERE YOU BELONG!
SHORTLY...
I'LL ADMIT, JOHN... YOUR STYLE TURNED ME OFF; I WAS MORE THAN READY TO STICK BLAME ON YOU--!
NO SWEAT, PAL! ONLY... STYLE ISN'T IMPORTANT... ANY MORE THAN COLOR!
WHERE OR WHEN, NO MAN CAN SAY...BUT REST ASSURED-- JOHN (GREEN LANTERN) STEWART WILL RETURN!
13

Green Lantern/Green Arrow #87

the guy that did all the creative work. The only creative work I did up there is wherever I fit into something that needed to be done and I was the best guy to do it. My main chore there was in the business end of things, along with Patty. I did some teaching while I was there too, we even contributed my

teaching salary too at Continuity because we were drawing a salary from there and we didn't want to double-dip and create problems with each other.

But Neal and I got along fine, the only problem was he used to come into the office, probably logically 12 o'clock, something like that, maybe later, but he knew the advertising agencies were going to call later in the day, so he was getting ready for that. By that time I had already been up for seven hours. I was beginning to run out of gas. I used to go out to lunch every day at 1pm. You know what? I still go out to lunch every day from my studio, I take two people with me and we go to lunch. You gotta get away from it every day. Neal didn't think that way. Neal was basically an artist, he was only happy when he was drawing. He enjoyed women too but drawing was his top love (laughter).

Superman Vs. Muhammad Ali

RD: So you had done a lot of work with Neal where you inked his stuff, it seemed for a while there that you were kind of his inker. Because there was a lot of stuff in a short period of time that mostly you inked. Was that something that kind of just happened, or did someone say, you know -

DG: I think it started out just happening, but as time went by I think both of us were agitating for us to work together, and by the time we got to the *Batman* books, which we did a whole slew of, and then *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, it became a normal thing. I was very pleased because Neal, without ever really complimenting me personally as an artist I'm talking about, would do things that showed that he understood what I was able to do. Another artist would come up while I was inking a car and say something like "you have to put diagonal shine marks on that car, because I had a method of putting the shine on an automobile."

On occasion, I remember one in particular where there was a close up of a gun, and he didn't know how to draw guns, but he just did a scribble and wrote "gun" in pencil! (laughter) You know that kind of stuff, so you could tell he recognized my value without ever really saying anything. We got along on the art, we got along, and occasionally I would do something where I misinterpreted what he did, what he said, and he would play around with it after I finished it by putting in some more pen lines, or something of that sort.

But I never felt that I was being imposed upon by his fooling around with this stuff on occasion. I enjoyed very much working with him. The problem was that Neal used to do so many different things that I always got the last page of the job under duress, time constraint. The *Superman/Muhammad Ali* book comes immediately to mind on that. It took him so long to do the cover. You remember the cover to that book?

RD: With all the faces? Yeah.

DG: He had to get a model release for everybody that was on the cover.

RD: Really? There's like 200 people on that cover!

DG: I'm on the cover, Patty is on the cover, everybody from Continuity is on the cover. So he had to do one figure at a time, because he couldn't do it until he got the model release! And of course that slowed things down, and they needed the last 10 pages like in two days, I didn't sleep for a while.

RD: Oh wow, that's brutal.

DG: It's ok, I got a bonus (laughter) you know for putting in the time getting it done. And I think if you look at it you won't notice any difference in the quality.

RD: It's a beautiful book, a high water mark.

DG: It is, it still holds up. Credit to Neal, not me.

RD: Oh you do quite well!

DG: I do my job, I've never been so modest that I wouldn't say to anyone that I didn't do my job. I like to believe I get the job done, it's what I do. And I still feel that way actually, I work because it's my business, it's

not a hobby, and I don't let people wrangle free artwork out of me. I don't want anybody to waste my time.

I have the same setup in my studio that we used to have at Continuity. Patty and Rob Jones take care of everything, except the drawings, so I can focus on the drawings. I draw, I ink, I will sometimes get involved like, Rob is doing a book and I'm an editor for it, I'll read the script and tell him what he did wrong on the artwork. It takes a few seconds, but otherwise I sit there and draw. They've relieved me of all concern except sitting there and getting the drawing done. The drawing is what brings the money in that pays their salary. It makes sense for them to do it that way too. At home it's even easier to do because I can pull my hearing aids out and I don't have to listen to any of the things that go on around me. My studio at home is really located in a bad place, it's not away from the family. I have my daughter, her husband and my two grandchildren living with me, so there's a lot of stuff passing in front of me during the course of the day. A lot of noises because we have animals too, my daughter has animals, we have a couple of birds in the house who never shut up.

Giordano at DC

But it's ok, I get the work done there as well as at the studio, but it's because of what the people at the studio do to clear my board. I get commissions to do, they keep track of them, gives me a copy of the check, a copy of the order, and a deadline, then sends me home. Then I just sit there and draw.

RD: It's a good gig! Ok let's talk a little bit about how you became the editor in chief of DC.

DG: Actually I had another title. I refused the editor in chief title, they tried to put it on me several times, because that implies that I'm a "word" guy and I'm a "picture" guy (laughter). Same thing at Charlton, I was editor in chief at Charlton too. The way that came about was, over a period of time when I was editing the *Batman* books, I showed not only that I had a handle on how to get a book done, and how to get it done on time, but I also had a handle on how to deal with people. That's the biggest part of the editor in chief's job is dealing with people. I discovered that what my job basically was, was creating environments for creativity to take place in. I know that's very fancy sounding, but that's what I did. If this writer didn't like Thursdays, I would say "Don't work on Thursday, just work on Friday." I'm exaggerating here but what I did was I treated each person as an individual and try to get them to do their best work. I didn't interfere with the work, that was another thing. Everybody says "You have a reputation as a hands-off editor" right? But I wasn't a hands-off editor. I would tell people what they wanted to hear so that they could sit down and work, and I hired people that I knew could do the job. I tried to avoid people who I wasn't familiar with until I'd seen some more of their work. But that happened a great deal, both at Charlton and later on at DC.

At DC it was one of those strange things where they used to have what's called a weekly call meeting, that means all the executives would get together and talk, I was there, I was invited. And then a little later on they hired someone who took a look at what you were doing and told you what you're doing wrong. At some point they asked Janette Khan who was the president, and Paul Levitz who was the vice president, what's he doing at these meetings? So he doesn't belong here. The following week I became a vice president (laughter) so I could continue to go to those meetings.

Once I was in that position - I was hired actually as an editor and as a special projects editor - if you've seen any of the Atari works that we did, that was me, I was in charge of the Atari stuff, and I was spending as much time in California because that's where Atari was. Then when Atari tanked and they were no longer part of my work day, then they started thinking about finding something for me to do that I could do well. And although the job had been promised originally to Len Wein, they found a way to make Len happy and to give me that job. I don't regret it, I enjoyed the work. If I had lived in Manhattan I probably would never have left there. If my wife hadn't passed away I probably wouldn't have left there, it was a great job.

I had a great secretary, and a little story on that one, my secretary was black, first black secretary in the

company - ever. I hired her because she could do the job, I didn't care. She's a wonderful person, she's visited me in Florida a couple of times. She's out of the comic department now, when I left they had to tell you that they throw secretaries into the grave when somebody leaves. But she moved into a much better position and she's making very good money now and doing well. She was a bright, bright girl.

RD: Obviously as you went further into your career and moved into a more of an editorial position, you tended to move more into inking, right?

DG: Well I was still doing the same amount of work. The rule basically was that I wasn't allowed, as a vice president, to do anything that I would have not have gotten if I was a freelancer. The whole point was I can't beat people over the head and say "I wanted to do that!" Pretty much that's how it worked out but, as an example, when John Byrne sort of let on that he would be interested in doing a new Superman, I was the one that went up to his house and we put a deal together. And he said at that point that he wanted me to ink the first six issues. So that was the deal, I inked the first six issues because John asked, not because I asked him or anybody else.

I MAY HAVE BEEN ABANDONED OUT THERE IN THE ENDLESS DEPTHS OF SPACE.
BUT I WAS BORN WHEN THE ROCKET CRASHED ON EARTH, IN AMERICA
I'LL CHERISH ALWAYS THE MEMORIES JOR-EL AND LARA GAVE ME...
BUT ONLY AS GLORIOUS FRAGMENTS OF A LIFE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.
KRYPTON MADE ME, BUT IT WAS EARTH THAT GAVE ME ALL I AM. ALL THAT MATTERS.
IT WAS KRYPTON THAT MADE ME SUPERMAN.
BUT IT IS THE EARTH THAT MAKES ME HUMAN!!

Man of Steel #6

I continued to do artwork in my own time. The deal was I wasn't doing artwork at all, not one pen line, in the office. Everything was done in my home studio in Connecticut. You couldn't mix the doves. I couldn't if I wanted to, and I didn't want to. That was the four o'clock in the morning that I threw out before, I used to wake up at four, and work until seven, take a shower, put on my clothes, then make the eight o'clock train, which was only five minutes away from my home. So that three hours of work I had on a regular work week, I had 15 hours for freelance. I'm fast, that's the way I am, I work faster then. And then if I have to, weekends and holidays I work full days, depending on the workload that I carried at that particular time.

During my time as editor in chief I inked 34 consecutive issues of the *Green Arrow* book. It worked out, there were no serious problems. After I finished the sixth issue mini series of *Superman*, I was inking *Action Comics*, which then was Superman and another super hero. After a while I think they decided that it was too much work for me and they asked me to give it up. No problem. There's always something to take it's place. Even then I was doing, dollar wise, not necessarily hours or anything else, more work for Joe Orlando's special projects department, which not everybody saw. You won't believe the amount to super hero stuff, and for what purposes. Hangers! Batman's head with this hanger coming out and his shoulders over here.

RD: And would that be things like coloring books and stuff?

DG: Yeah, everything. Pop-up books, coloring books, I did a pop-up Wonder Woman book with Ross Andru, and most of my dollars came from Orlando's department they paid a much higher rate. That was business, that was for licenses. That wasn't entertainment so it was paid at a different rate. Almost at the least, rate and a half, in other words for every $100 you would get for a page of regular comic gooks, you'd get $150 for a page with Joe Orlando. And most of it, because they tended to be one drawing here, one drawing there, I used to do in the three hours in the morning. Pick up the job the previous afternoon, bring it back the next morning finished.

RD: And they'd be very happy with that I'm sure.

DG: Oh yeah they were, Joe was! (laughter)

RD: So that's one thing about the comics business is there's always deadline pressures.

DG: I never missed a deadline, comic book or otherwise, not in my nature, and the easiest way to do that is don't take on work that you know you can't make the deadline. That's where Neal made his mistake. Neal like to do "A" so when somebody called him and said do you wanna do "A" he'd say yeah, and the guy would give him a deadline but it would go in one ear and out the other. He just wanted to do the work because he was so interested in that particular job. But if I can't get the time or the money to do a job, I pass on it. Still, that was the attitude then, that's my attitude now. Having a reputation for making deadlines helps getting more work, no point in not doing it.

RD: Very important. So creatively, I mean obviously again as we just spoke about, you ended up doing more inking and embellishing work than the primary work. So creatively for you, were you OK with that, was that OK for you to do?

DG: Oh yeah. First of all I had a very recognizable style. A lot of the people that come up to the table at conventions say I used to be able to recognize what you did. I'm not sure if the pencilers liked that my style came through theirs, but I couldn't help it. I wasn't trying to overwhelm their work, I was just trying to do it my way. And my way was very quick, that's one of the reason for making deadlines. If you go back to the old things, you see a lot of things that are obviously quick strokes. My approach to it was inking is like doing water colors, you can't fix it. You do it right the first time or you do it over again. Well that put the fear of God in you, you don't want to do it over again. But I did it crisp. Most of my works was straight lines. I didn't do too many lines that curved, it was straight line, straight line, straight line, because it gave you a crisp, hard-edged look to it. It was intentional and that crisp, hard-edged line is what those people recognize. I ink that everybody differently, but they recognize that crisp work, because that was part of it. And the funny thing is right now I'm not doing any inking at all, I'm penciling. The work I'm doing for Bob Layton is penciled and the one for five pages a week for Comic Mix is penciled. The only thing I ink is the stuff that I pencil for commissions where they want the commission drawings inked.

Wonder Woman Coloring Book Illustration

RD: So you've come full circle!

DG: Yeah, I started out as a penciler, a penciler and inker mostly, but when I wasn't inking my own stuff I was penciling for somebody else. When I started working at DC, because I knew I only had those couple of hours in the morning, I presented myself as a an inker at DC in '67, because no matter how tired you are, or how few hours you've got, you know you can always do something in that time. Rule straight lines, you can trim the blacks, and then do the rest of the work later. So I said I'm and inker and I came up with an ink rate and somehow that led to my getting all of those inking assignments later. But it was purely and accident, I was really a penciler before that.

RD: Oh yeah, a very fine one too! And of course, even within the inking, you are widely recognized as one of the best that there has been. When I talked to Joe Sinnott, who's also a fine artist, it's because he had that base as being a good artist first, that he could be such a good inker, because he knew how to do draw, rather than just embellish.

DG: Thank you. I never really drew a line between the two, I still don't. Just a different tool in your hand. As a matter of fact, as a penciler, I think of myself as a storyteller. I'm concerned mostly with the storytelling. If I'm going to ink the material myself, I know what I'm going to do in general so I don't think about it. When I was inking, what I thought I was doing was helping the penciler along, and sometimes when I inked my own stuff I'm helping me the penciler along, because I'll make mistakes when I pencil, then fix them up when I ink. I never draw a really hard line between the two. I found them both enjoyable for different reasons, and as a matter of fact to answer the question "What did I like best, editing, penciling or inking?" my answer is "Whatever I was doing that day." That was my serious answer. I can focus on whatever I am doing for that day and enjoy it for what it is. Different skill sets, but I managed to acquire them.

Nobody beat me, that was one of the good things working at Charlton, I learned a lot of stuff without anybody looking over my shoulder, just by looking. I found out how plates are engraved, they don't do that anymore, but I found out about them and how the round plates are made. I found out how type was set, hot type in those days. I learned a lot about drawing from looking at the people who were working for me whose work I admired - Jim Aparo, Pat Boyette - there were a bunch of people working for me that were quite good at what they were doing. And actually after I left Charlton, and not having drawn for a period of time, I actually was better than I was before just from looking. I learned from looking. A lot of people do that, it's not unusal.

RD: So what was it like running Charlton?

DG: I would like to say fun but it wasn't entirely that, and I would like to say weird but it wasn't entirely that either. Charlton was a unique operation, I'm not sure how familiar you are with it. It was editorial offices, business offices, bindery, engraving, printing, shipping, same building. I had an office on the top floor of the editorial offices, and I spent as much time in the plant as I did in my own office. Because I scheduled the material that was going to be finished on Thursday, on Friday it's going to the engraver, and so on and so forth. I scheduled the material through the plant. That's how I learned a lot about scheduling

that I didn't know before. It's pretty mechanical, trust me it's easy to do, but they made it sound like it was the holy grail (laughter).

On the other hand, our boss was competing with us, he would sell used comics, whatever returns we got that didn't sell, he would sell them on the used market, three for a penny or something like that. The trucks would come in the garage in the back filled with comics, next day I go out there, where's the comics? (laughter) They were gone, he used to do it at night when nobody could watch him. Press was running 24 hours a day, and I lived close enough so that when a comic book, especially an important one was going on press, three o'clock in the morning I used to drag my ass out of bed and go down there and check off the initial proofs.

By the time I left Charlton, the boss I started working for was out of the picture and his son was running it. His son was more of a contemporary of mine, his father was much older than I was. And we saw eye-to-eye but the son was running the business the way the father wanted. I remember when the licensing tried to get some licensed comics out there, along with the regular one, and he was fun to be with, the son, but he was running Charlton the way Charlton has always been run. Give you an example about artwork. In the plant they had, I don't know if you could call it a room, somebody banged together a bunch of boards which was about eight, nine feet high. put a door on it - the plant is much higher - and they used to save the artwork in there. The engravers used to bring, after they shot the artwork, they would throw it in there. I went in there occasionally and retrieved some stuff of mine that I wanted. They used to basically throw it over the top! They didn't even bother to unlock the door! So when you open the door there's this mass of comic book pages (laughter). I understand that after I left they organized that and put it into a different building actually. But I don't think they ever got to returning the artwork.

The only Charlton artwork that I saved I managed to sneak out of a building by going into that room, whatever it was, and digging through the piles to find my stuff (laughter). But it wasn't unusual. What bothered me most about it to be truthful with you is that they had the whole thing worked out so that they could produce quality work at half the price of anybody else because it was self-contained. No one else ever in this business has been self-contained, where editorial to shipping takes place in the same building. They chose to be junk merchants rather than being a good publishers. They could have been good publishers. What it was, was they a handle on the music lyrics business, which of course today is a meaningless thing, music today is not lyrics, it's something else. Sometimes somebody sings words, but it's not lyrics, but in those days the ballads and soft songs and all that, people wanted to know what the words were to the songs. And they were in the song business: *Hit Parader* and *Song Hits* and country-western, and they had the rights to print the lyrics, and they were done on very cheap paper, like comic book paper, with a glossy cover. That was their business and they didn't care about anything else. When that business died, they closed the plant. There was not enough business in comics or any of their other things. They produced horoscopes, crosswords, all on the comic book paper, all done in the office. The only difference was, I think it was crosswords, were done by prisoners, for $5 a piece (laughter).

Deathmask #2

And the one that tells you all you need to know about Charlton, and this will be the last story I'll tell you, I had to walk to the back of the plant one time and there were plates on skids all over the place and I'm walking with kind of a route to get to where I was going, and on the way back I walked the same kind of route. I went up to the boss and said "When are you going to get those plates out of there so we can move around the plane?" and he says "When the price of scrap metal goes up." That's when I knew I was doomed (laughter). The price of scrap metal was more important than the efficiency in the plant.

You know what it is was a penny a pound or a penny and a quarter a pound, it's not as if he's getting rich. That was the end of it for me and it was shortly after that I made my deal with DC. They didn't want me to move. And DC didn't want me to retire. And I'm happy about that and I'm glad that we never had, well that I never had never had that kind of stress with anybody actually, you know, get to the point where they say "Let's fire Dick!" (laughter).

RD: Well most everybody has good things to say about you! Thank you so much for joining us, Dick.

DG: It was been a pleasure. My pleasure. Thank you very much!

This interview is taken from the video interview conducted with Joe and can be found on Creator Chronicles: The Interviews 2007-2014, available on Bluray and a limited-edition signed DVD. For more information or to order this Bluray, please visit http://www.amdalemedia.com/ccvideo.shtml.

From Batman to Gotham:
50 years of Comic Book TV Heroes
Animated Shows Part 1

Cartoons! Since the late 60s, super hero cartoons have been a staple of Saturday morning and after school TV. Today we call them by their more contemporary terminology, the animated series, but for most of us who grew up with them, the common parlance is cartoons. So ingrained is the term that even the Cartoon Network uses the term for it's name, since "The Animated Network" just wouldn't have the same ring to it, nor would it invoke the same familiar feelings.

Considering that comic book super heroes have been around since just before World War II, and how readily animation lends itself to portraying them, it's amazing that it wasn't until after the silver age resurgence in heroes that super hero cartoons would finally take off in the late 60s. Granted this was when TVs had finally gotten into a significant number of American homes, but the timing is still curious.

Another interesting observation about the whole comic book animated super hero genre on television is that, with only a few exceptions along the way and in recent times, it is almost entirely dominated by DC Comics shows from Super Friends onward.

***Superman* (1942)**

In the pre-TV era, animation in general was largely in the form of brief animated short films, called "shorts." Superman once again led the way with the first foray into super hero animation in the early-1940s with the Fleischer Studios ***Superman*** shorts that ran in front of movies of the time in theaters. Formed by brothers Max and Dave Fleischer, their animation was often rotoscoped and ran at the full 24 frames per second rate of film. This produced some of the most lavish and smooth animation seen during this period.

Technically speaking, only the first nine cartoons were produced by the Fleischer Studios themselves before they were bought out by Paramount, renamed Famous Studios, the brothers left over a differences and had a falling out. The subsequent eight final episodes were produced by others but retained the lush animation of the first batch. What did change significantly were the storylines and presentation. The Fleischer produced episodes mostly had a SciFi bent and sensibility, with mad scientists, giant robots, and other mechanical opponents. With the studio change, the last episodes were more World War II propaganda with a decided shift to fighting Nazis.

For over 2 decades to follow, this was the only significant attempt at doing comic book super heroes in animation. It was such a high water mark right out of the gate however, that it would be even more decades until something of comparable quality came along.

Over time a number of things coincided to move animation towards television. The first is the television itself, which didn't really start to come out as a consumer technology until after World War II. Another factor was the breakup and diminishment of the Hollywood studio system, which began in the post-war period, led to a fractured big-screen marketplace. This led to a decline in animated shorts being produced and their eventual evolution into "programs" for the new television medium, with most aimed at children.

The first to arrive on the air on September 1, 1966 was ***The Marvel Super Heroes*** show, beating DC's Superman offering by nine days. These were 7 minutes segments that originally ran as a half-hour block of the same character for that show. The characters rotated between Captain America, Hulk, Iron Man, Thor and the Sub-Mariner. The show aired in broadcast syndication and actually ran in the evenings 5 nights a week.

As this was a cartoon, most people expected it to be animated. What they got was something considerably less so. The "animation" was cheaper than cheap, taking cost and time savings to a new pinnacle (or low) and consisted almost entirely of still frames made from Xeroxes of the comic art panels, with minimal animation in the form of mouth movements, sometimes an arm swing, or a silhouette moving. Despite all the compromises that would come in various subsequent animated shows, this was the nadir right out of the box. They may be looked back on fondly by some these days through the lens of nostalgia, but by any objective standard this was a schlock presentation.

That being said, the stories, while simpler than the comics, were a fair representation of the comics, generally using the entirety of the stories. At least the artists work was seen literally in these cartoons, instead of some interpretation that would occur in most. Also of note was that the *X-Men* actually appeared for the first

time on TV in this series. In one *Sub-Mariner* episode, they appear as a group called Allies for Peace. This was a story adapted from #6 of the *Fantastic Four* comics, but the show couldn't use the FF, so they used the *X-Men* of that time. Even though they weren't called the *X-Men*, all the characters used their original names, powers, and designs *The Avengers* also appeared in several episodes by virtue of the fact that most of the characters of the comic were on the show anyway, so some episodes had them all team up together.

The reason the ***Fantastic Four*** were not available for *The Marvel Super Heroes* show is because they had their own show coming in 1967 from Hanna-Barbera. The show ran for 20 episodes on ABC for several years in various repeats. This effort was considerably better in the animation department, being fully animated (subject to the various limitations of animation of the time - see sidebar) and adhering mostly to the comic cannon. The show didn't quite capture the essence of the dynamic of the comic - like most of the early comic adaptations, it focused on the obvious elements that would make an attractive action show - but it did have the essentials, and an actual flaming Human Torch.

The New Adventures of Superman was a reasonably faithful adaptation of the character. The show was actually animated, though nowhere near as fluid as its 40s predecessor. All the main cast of characters were represented, with the voice cast of Clark, Lois, Perry and Jimmy all handled by their respective actors from the radio show. Villains were mostly monster and SciFi based, though Luthor and a few others like Toyman and Brainiac appear as well. The shows were very juvenile, playing a bit like later *Scooby Doo's* but without the hip sensibility and sharp writing. They just didn't seem to have the tone right yet, but real effort was made and Superman was the prime component of each show.

Alternating with Superman episodes, each part running 7 minutes, were *Superboy* episodes for the first season. In season two, the alternate stories were various DC Silver Age characters as well as the *Justice League* and *Teen Titans*. These segments were perhaps the most fun of them all, not having quite the same storytelling restrictions that Superman, having been around for 30 years now and become a cultural icon, would be shackled with to present him in the most image-conscious ways possible.

For the third season, the alternate segments were *Batman and Robin*, hot on the heels of the massively successful pop-culture *Batman* live-action show ABC. Olan Soule would voice Batman, and Casey Kasem voiced Robin. Kasem would shortly go on to be a pop-culture icon in his own right with that distinctive radio-ready voice of his. Casem would be the voice of a generation of pop music when he co-created and hosted the *American Top 40* countdown from 1970 to 1988 and then again from the 1995 relaunch through 2004. Through it all, he and Soule would voice Batman and Robin in nearly all incarnations through the 80s.

To create the show, DC tapped a new animation studio, the now-legendary Filmation. Filmation had been formed a few years earlier and produced mostly advertising by this point, though they had created a couple of animated features but they were unsold/unreleased when DC came calling. Filmation would epitomize cheap, fast and low quality animation and the entire industry followed suit. Unlike all other animation studios however, Filmation productions were entirely made in the USA.

Filmation kept costs down primarily by utilizing long horizontal panning shots across static backgrounds and fast jump-cuts between stock and repeating footage. They would get a little better with the excellent *Flash Gordon* cartoon, due to it mostly being rotoscoped, and the *He-Man* and *She-Ra* shows.

A Brief Look at How Animated TV Works

In order to keep the costs as low as possible and maximize the speed of production, several techniques were employed. Unfortunately, these techniques resulted in what most consider poor quality animation especially early on where it wasn't too technologically challenging. Things came down mostly to the skill of the animator weighed against cost and time considerations.

The primary technique was to simply animate less frames. Whereas film runs at 24 frames per second (fps) and TV at 30, most animation would fall in the 10-15 fps range. This was a tremendous time saver at the expense of smoothness, yielding jerky, jumpy motion. It was deemed "good enough" however and has persisted in one form or another since.

One of the other significant techniques was to severely limit movement, of both the camera and the characters. This would particularly impact any "3D" type movement that would involve changing the scale throughout the animation, such as a character flying toward the camera in perspective. Hence why you see most 60s and 70s animation as static shots, horizontal scrolling shots, and things like Wonder Woman swinging her lasso in a repeating loop while talking or describing something.

Another way, particularly with Filmation produced work, was to use stock footage and repeating shots, sometimes from within the same show, sometimes from other productions. Rotoscoping would be used later in some cases to improve quality and speed of delivery. Static shots of faces where only the mouth moved for dialogue (and if you were really lucky, sometimes an eye blink or two!) or a character leaping into or out of a shot with nothing else moving were also utilized extensively. This led to very wooden and stilted "animation" in character movements and interactions. Fluidity of movement, indeed even overall quality, was secondary to cost and just making something for kids to watch so the networks could sell advertising.

The show would have some major ramifications for future super hero TV shows when the series ran afoul of the Action for Children's Television grassroots organization that sprang up in the later 60s. The group objected to the fighting and perceived violence in children's action cartoon series. The ensuing debate would lead to some significant restrictions on the type of action and violence that all cartoons could portray. Rarely would any kind of punching or similar action be shown, rather action was limited to things like menacing action toward a character but no

actual combat or harm, and the only destruction would be to inanimate objects like machinery or buildings. Comedy would be heightened and dramatic conflict watered down to the level of disagreements and misunderstandings. The series was cancelled with the next season, but these strictures would persist throughout every subsequent cartoon effort until the 90s.

Of course, the most successful and iconic of the 60s super hero cartoons was ***Spider-Man*** in 1967. Running three years on Saturday mornings on ABC and syndication for its final year, *Spider-Man* had it all - at least for its first season. It featured quite good animation relative to its time and a theme song that became as well known as the one for *Batman*. The first season was boffo,

Spider-Man (1967)

featuring many of Spidey's great villains roster and above average storytelling, though nothing as complex or moving as the comic, still managed to rise above the completely childish efforts of the other Marvel cartoons of this period. Paul Soles would provide the voice of Spidey, though he sounded too old and more like Adam West than Peter Parker. It was a real kick seeing Spider-Man on the TV spinning his webs, though his signature wisecracks and one-liners were flat and obvious.

And then came the cost-cutting in the second season. Grantray-Lawrence Animation, who produced the first season, went bankrupt and Ralph Bakshi, who was just beginning his career, was saddled with the task of keeping the show going on a fraction of the budget. Gone were most of the villains and better stories. In their place were greatly simplified plots and endless, and we mean absolutely endless, shots of Spidey traveling, swinging through mostly subterranean stock backgrounds, repeated over and over and over throughout each episode. Even the young children were not fooled by this obvious change in tone, pace and storytelling. The 3rd season was even worse, falling to a level similar to other comic cartoons of the period, with insipid stories, bad acting, and poor animation. Even with all that, the show was still a cut above the other 60s Marvel shows and is generally remembered very favorably.

The 70s were the golden age of television cartoons, particularly of the Saturday morning and after school varieties. By this time most US households had at least one TV following the rapid expansion, continually lowering prices, and consumer boom of the 60s. Television in general had finally arrived, with programming available from the wee hours of the morning until the wee hours of the morning again. The 24 hour programming of today was a ways off yet, but was getting closer.

The 60s super hero cartoons had died off by 1970, and after a few years something new was needed. Switching from Filmation to Hanna-Barbera, most of the previous DC super hero cartoons were rolled into the legendary ***Super Friends*** show in 1973. Essentially the Justice League with a more kid-friendly name, the show would become a cultural icon in Saturday morning cartoons and spawn a number of subsequent series in the Super Friends family.

The show actually had something of a backdoor "pilot" or test when Batman and Robin appeared in two episodes of The New Scooby-Doo Movies the year prior. This testing of the waters showed that superheroes were still of interest and gave the green light to move ahead with *Super Friends*. Like Scooby Doo and many other Hanna-Babera shows, the formula would team the super heroes with two youths and a semi-intelligent dog as sidekicks. The youths would be amateur detectives poking their nose into everything and getting into a jam, requiring the heroes to come to the rescue. Most of the early Super Friends series would revolve around, and have the plots driven by, this dynamic.

Premiering Saturday morning on September 8, 1973 on ABC, the show itself was well done but didn't feature many characters outside of the core team. Villains and conflicts revolved almost entirely around some kind of science based threat or machine running out of control. The core group, sometimes directly referred to as the Justice League, consisted of Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman and Robin and Aquaman. They are accompanied, though some would say hampered, by junior members Wendy, Marvin and Wonder Dog, here playing roles similar to the Scooby Doo team. There were very few guest heroes, with only Plastic Man, Flash, and Green Arrow making brief appearances. They all met at The Hall of Justice, nearly a character in it's own right. A magnificent structure, it is actually modeled on a real place: the former art deco Cincinnati Union Terminal in Ohio, now turned into a museum.

Super Friends (1973)

The action was light, primarily consisting of rescues and prevention of catastrophe, and violence virtually non-existent. Humor played its part, but the stories and characterizations were played more dramatically with a greater sense of peril and tension than most anything that came before. The theme song was catchy and contemporary for the time, and all the musical cues and themes were significantly improved over their 60s counterparts. There was a lot of maturing in the production and presentation. The animation was much better and though it still suffered from many of the cost and time cutting techniques, these were less noticeable and repetitive.

The Hall of Justice and its inspiration, Cincinnati Union Terminal

Olan Soule and Casey Kasem reprised their roles as Batman and Robin, and character actor Norman Alden (the guy who chides Marty McFly about his choice of beverage in the cafe in 1955 in Back to the Future) voiced Aquaman. Danny Dark, famous for his advertising voice work such as "This Bud's For You," lent his deep baritone to Superman. Ted Knight, from the *Mary Tyler Moore* show, pushed his "radio voice" to the limit as the voice-over narrator of the series. Shannon Farnon was actually the second actress to give voice to Wonder Woman, the first was Jane Webb in an episode of *The Brady Kids* guest starring Wonder Woman, but her interpretation is still the standard by which the character is measured. All of the voice work was handled by nine actors and actresses, for both heroes and villains.

The impact of the show long term was tremendous. It set the tone and pattern for all super hero animated shows until the 90s, but remains influential to one degree or another. So seminal was the show that for years to come, these images and voices are what many recall when they think of these characters. The show was a modest success, but it wouldn't become the memorable show we know today until a few years later.

The show was cancelled after one season of 16 hour-long episodes, and existed in repeats for a couple of years. This might have been the end for a long time were it not for a big upswing in super heroes on prime-time live action that came up in the mid-70s. During this time and until the early 80s, there was a concerted effort to get super heroes onto screens, big and small. This was the era of the first Superman movie, Wonder Woman on TV, and similar types of shows like the Six Million Dollar Man. All of these raised interest in this type of programming and this lead ABC to revive the Super Friends in 1976. This time it would stick, and the Super Friends would air in one form or another for the next decade.

The New Fantastic Four (1978)

The late 70s saw a veritable explosion of comics in the media. Suddenly it seemed the networks were finally interested in super heroes. Alas, that interest was only superficial as most of the efforts were far off the mark of their comic book sources, and not just for technological and special effects reasons. Core elements were changed or never used, and this would show up mostly in the live-action area, but also would occur in some of the cartoons. Still, cartoons were the best chance to get the best portrayal of the characters, at least visually if nothing else. When Super Friends was cancelled, it was put into rerun rotations and the popularity and interest stayed strong. In the wake of the success of *Wonder Woman*, *Spider-Man*, and *Incredible Hulk* live-action shows, there was a considerable expansion in the super hero offerings on TV.

Batman had a small foray of his own during the Super Friends era. in 1977 a new Batman cartoon was created by Filmation for CBS, a rare case of characters from a cartoon showing up in two competing productions at the same time. ***The New Adventures of Batman*** couldn't use the Super Friends voice actors, so no less than Adam West and Burt Ward reprised their roles in animation for the first time since the 60s live-action *Batman*. The show also featured a souped-up, modernized Batmobile and it followed the trend of having youths incorporated into the stories. The

animation is better than the 60s offering, but the tone is still very juvenile and corny. Batgirl, Batmite and several Bat-villains appear throughout, and the Joker makes a rare appearance in a couple of episodes. The show has its charms, but wasn't as much fun as the Batman and Robin of the *Super Friends*.

As part of Marvel Comics forays into late 70s TV, the Fantastic Four got a new cartoon in 1978 titled ***The New Fantastic Four***. This show came in the wake of Star Wars massive success, so everyone had to have a droid or other SciFi bent to their offerings. *The New Fantastic Four* replaced the Human Torch with a flying robot named H.E.R.B.I.E. because of this trend and because rights to the Human Torch character were tied up in a proposed TV pilot movie that eventually never got made.

The Plastic Man Comedy/Adventure Show (1979)

Otherwise the show was a decent take on the Fantastic Four, if a bit short lived at a single 13 episode season. It featured many of the main villains, went to space and the negative zone, and had plenty of Doom.

Perhaps the strangest super hero cartoon of this era, possibly of all time, was the 1979 NBC show ***Fred And Barney Meet The Thing***. This bizarre juxtaposition of two completely unconnected cartoon franchises was a head scratcher to everyone, made even more perplexing in that the characters never actually meet, interact or share any episodes together, just the opening credits. The Thing half-hour segments feature a happy-go-lucky Ben Grimm, who is a high school student that changes into the Thing at will to handle things like mundane high school and biker problems. Eschewed was, well, everything about the character from the comics except the name and basic powers. Peculiar it is, a good representation of the character it isn't.

By the time the 80s dawned, Super Friends was still going strong but would be joined by a few other shows. ***The Plastic Man Comedy/Adventure Show*** first aired in 1979 and ran for about a year and a half. Produced by Ruby-Spears, the show was a wacky comedy-adventure comic book show with a bit more well constructed one-liners and setups than the typical fare of the day, and better animation than most. The nature of the character lent itself to all manner of visual gags that were quite clever and fun. It is also unique for its time in that the main character falls in love with and marries his girlfriend, then they have a baby Plas. Quite a difference from most other Saturday morning cartoon shows!

Marvel had a few more series in this early 80s period. First out of the gate was ***Spider-Woman*** in 1979, featuring Joan Van Ark as Jessica Drew. Spider-Man would be voiced in this series by Paul Soles from the 60s *Spider-Man* series. Spider-Woman's powers differed in many ways from the comic, giving her a wide array of inexplicable powers due more to the needs of the plot than any logic in her origin. Gone also were the darker elements, turning Spider-Woman into more of an adventurer who traveled to exotic locales to fight evil. A fair effort for the time, but once again it's another show having little reflection of the source material.

A better adaptation of the comics was ***Spider-Man and his Amazing Friends*** in 1981 and was an overt attempt by NBC to replicate the Super Friends success. Lucky for them, they mostly succeeded even if the show had a relatively short life.

The show is notable in many ways. Depicting Peter as a college student, complete with a high-tech super-hero pad, he is joined by two super-hero roommates: Iceman, from the X-Men, and Firestar. The Human Torch was originally slated to appear, but due to much the same legal hold-ups that kept him off the New Fantastic Four, he was prohibited from appearing here. In a stoke of genius and luck, a new character with similar powers was

Spider-Man And His Amazing Friends (1981)

created in Firestar, a female mutant. She would become so popular that she would eventually be introduced into the comics proper, marking one of the first (but not only!) times this has occurred. Borrowing a page from Super Friends, they called themselves the Spider Friends.

The show was big hit, and a really good Spider-Man show, complete with silliness with Aunt May and her dog, a host of villains, lively action, solid writing and animation, and proper quips from all involved. It really felt like three crime fighting college friends. Still missing the angst-y drama though, but that would come in time.

The weird wrinkle in this whole Spider-Family was another ***Spider-Man*** show that aired concurrently with the Amazing Friends show. The two shows even shared title credit sequences

and other animation! The two shows aren't technically connected, though there are a couple of crossover moments. Different stories, voice actors, and villains also separate them, but the animation style and tone of the shows are basically the same.

The last Marvel cartoon series to air in the 80s was ***The Incredible Hulk*** in 1982 on NBC, running after *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*. The show was the most comic accurate depiction of the Hulk character yet, as the live-action show only used the core elements of the source. It followed the origin and villains of the comic closely. The designs and look of the show were based on Sal Buscema's art on the character. The show ran one season of 13 episodes and was a fine version of the character.

By the end of 1983, the only major super hero show left standing was the Super Friends franchise. The franchise had actually expanded into several different shows, changing title and format for several iterations. The first was ***The All-New Super Friends Hour*** in 1977. This was a revival of the original Super Friends when the network felt the pressure to renew after declining a couple of years before. When it came back, it found a huge audience of kids just waiting to gobble up more super heroes.

The show carried over the main heroes, but they would be joined by a wider range of guest heroes and many team-ups. The opening credit sequence and music were completely reworked and have since become synonymous with the Super Friends, with it's rousing, catchy score. 15 one-hour shows were produced, and spent many years in repeats and syndication in various edited forms. The show was a big winner in the ratings for ABC and led to them to really pull out all the stops on the next season, which would completely revamp the show and give fans what they have always wanted in a comic super hero cartoon.

In an effort to innovate and improve upon the success of ANSF, the follow up was titled Challenge of the Super Friends and in 1978 Saturday morning cartoons were treated to the truest depiction yet of the classic DC super heroes. Gone were (most) of the jokey comic relief and moral lessons of ANSF, and in were actual super villains! And not just a few guest appearances, the entire show revolved around an whole group of super villains versus the Super Friends. Inspirationally named The Legion of Doom, and operating out a sort of a giant domed Darth Vader helmet that rose out of a swamp, this group of dastardly fiends was comprised of many of DC's greatest villains, most of which corresponded with their Super Friends hero.

Various Super Friends opening credits scenes. Challenge, World's Greatest, The Legendary Super Powers Show, and Galactic Guardians.

TANSFH had a very different format from the Super Friends. Jettisoning the hour-long stories, the show was comprised of four primary segments that were fairly fixed for format, with some additional short segments added with things like how to do a magic trick or some other teaching element. Teaching and lessons were a significant part of the show. New characters Zan and Jayna replaced Wendy and Marvin, this time they actually had super powers. Zan could turn into various forms of water and Jayna could transform into some kind of animal. They had to work in tandem, and change at the same time by touching hands (this may have led to the modern "fist bump") and saying "Wonder Twins power…activate!" which has become the source of numerous pop culture references ever since. They, along with their pet alien Gleek, provided some comic relief and had their own segment of the show.

The rise of cartoons in the 60s and 70s gave rise to concern over the affect they might have on youth. Violence was criticized and excised, and in this time moral or other object lessons were added to make the shows more palatable to parents. This would usually take the form of the Wonder Twins getting the youths out a jam that was the result of some misbehavior that the youths got themselves into.

The Super Friends roster expanded as well, now including Green Lantern, The Flash and Hawkman as regular members, and new members Black Vulcan (based on Black Lightning), Apache Chief and Samurai, created specifically for the cartoon to add what may be the first effort in pop culture at racial and cultural diversity.

There were many good episodes, but the best ones were the two origin story episodes. The most significant is "History of Doom", sort of a companion episode to an earlier episode titled "Secret Origins of The Super Friends." Both episodes feature brief, capsule origins of some of the Super Friends and Legion of Doom. Most people watching the shows weren't all that familiar with the histories of these characters, so for many these episodes were their first exposure to their origins.

The earth lies in ruins, devastated by some calamity. Three aliens arrive on earth to try to unravel what happened. At the wrecked Hall of Justice, the aliens review some memory "tapes" containing video of the last message from a visibly beaten Superman, where he relays that the Legion of Doom is responsible. The aliens consult the archives stored in the Justice League computer and gain access to the histories and origins of several of the Legion of Doom's villains, as well as how the LoD caused the destruction of earth. After reviewing the tapes, the aliens intervene and rewind

time, along with preventing the destructive solar flare, providing the Earth with a second chance. They hope the ongoing conflict between the heroes and villains can be resolved by means other than force and violence. It was also the only story to run the full length of an entire episode, all the rest were split into two segments.

This was quite a different tone from all the previous series, and even the previous episodes of Challenge themselves. Much darker in tone, it immediately made an impression. The show in general played off the "doom" aspect of the LoD's name for titles of many of the episodes, but this, along with the previous "Super Friends: Rest in Peace" episode dealt with much more serious subject matter of death and overt destruction. Cartoons were growing up a bit, and starting to aim at an older audience.

Superman (1988)

Production values on the show were quite good, with the animation being a bit better than previous shows. The show was another big hit, and largely considered the high water mark of all the Super Friends shows.

The Legendary Super Powers Show in 1984 would be something of a hybrid, carrying over heroes and other elements from Super Friends, but also calling in many other comic book characters and bringing it all closer to the source material. The other significant change came in the form of a massive toy merchandising initiative that would use the show to push a toy line. This would be the start of a huge expansion of comic toys that came about when Kenner won the license for DC action figures from Mego. The line had many action figures, vehicles, playsets and more and was the successful progenitor of the various comic book toy lines we see today.

The show itself was a moderate success, featuring an expanded roster that included new members Firestorm and El Dorado, and primary villains Darkseid and Braniac. Most of the stories revolved around Darkseid and Desaad scheming to take over the Earth and make Wonder Woman his bride!

The Super Powers Team: Galactic Guardians would be the Super Friends swan song in 1985. The show was renamed to better align it with the Kenner toy line, now called The Super Powers Collection. Galactic Guardians would make a number of changes, including maturing storytelling, the addition of Cyborg and several other comic-specific elements, improved animation, and the origin of Batman told for the first time outside of the comics. Despite these improvements and an overall positive response, the show was cancelled after one season.

The Super Friends series spanned a dozen years and greatly expanded the market for super heroes on TV. Things tapered off significantly after 1985 with only two series coming out in this period.

For 50th anniversary of ***Superman***, a short 1 season animated series was created by Ruby-Spears and aired on CBS. Marv Wolfman was the head story editor, so the series was a better take on the character than most. It borrowed many elements from the Byrne comic revamp, though Superman here tended to try to think his way out of problems before using his powers. If Superman's voice sounds familiar, it's because the actor, Beau Weaver, would go on to voice Mr. Fantastic in the Fantastic Four animated series a few years later. Overall it was an enjoyable with solid animation and stories.

Swamp Thing strangely enough got an animated series in 1990 to coincide with the Kenner action figure collection in 1990. The show flopped and the entire enterprise was a massive failure. It only aired 5 episodes. Kenner invested a whopping $6 million into creating the toy line when test results showed the line would be more popular than *GI Joe* and the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* with male children from 6-11 years old. Other merchandising was developed to tie in and released over the next 2 years or so.

Batman: The Animated Series (1992)

The early 90s were a boom time for comics. This had slowly been building since a bit of a market crash/pullback that occurred in the mid-80s that affected the entire market. The seeds of the boom began in large part with the rise of the "grim and gritty" movement in comics, honest experimentation with the form of comics by artists such as Bill Sienkiewicz, and the significant impact of independent comics that began in the early 80s, bombed out by mid-80s, and began to rebuild and come back again by the early 90s. With the rise in popularity of the "new generation" of comic artists like Todd McFarlane on Amazing Spider-Man, Jim

Lee on X-Men and Rob Liefeld on New Mutants, comics were starting to get more mainstream attention. Big plans were being made to parley this success into TV and movies.

The massive success and critical acclaim of the *Batman* movie cast a huge shadow and prompted everyone to re-evaluate their approach to comic book material. It wasn't a panacea, as it would take about a decade to really get them done right, and even then there were many bad takes, but overall there was a more serious attitude towards fidelity to the sources in the production of comic book material in TV and movies.

By the late 80s, super hero cartoons were considered passé, but after the effects of these events took hold it was time to buckle up because super hero cartoons were about to come back in a big way.

Batman: The Animated Series was the first out the gate in the fall of 1992 on the FOX network. Airing in the late afternoons, it not only significantly raised the bar for comic book animated shows, it was instrumental in setting the template that most DC shows, as well as many others, would follow to this day. Now called an "animated series" to differentiate it from the previous cartoons for young children, Batman: TAS would straddle that line between a show attractive to adults, kids and all in between. Nearly all shows that followed this more up-market trend would utilize this naming approach from here out. The masterminds behind this fine achievement was Bruce Timm and Eric Radomski, with of the writing heavy lifting handled by Paul Dini, Michael Reaves, Randy Rogel, Steve Perry, Brynne Stephens, Sean Catherine Derek, Alan Burnett and Laren Bright. Together with executive producers Jean MacCurdy and Tom Ruegger, this team would propel Batman: TAS to becoming one of the most critically acclaimed and successful animated shows of all time.

Batman and Catwoman

Taking its cue directly from the "grim and gritty" update to Batman that began with Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Batman: TAS* most definitely plays on the "I Am The Night" aspect of Batman, running just shy of outright psychosis or vengeance, but with a healthy dose of justice, drama, and violence. Oh yes, there was violence this time out. Gone were the days of hardly ever showing direct contact between heroes and villains. This time around, Batman is fully vested in onscreen action, with direct shots of punches landing, people getting thrown around, and an overall level of mayhem that was unheard of during the previous generations. It completely fit the show and ratcheted up the excitement factor.

But the show wasn't just about violent confrontations, it had a very high level of character development, more than you sometimes see in even a live-action show. Drama was emphasized over explicit violence or gore or anything like that, and was used

A Revamped Mr. Freeze

to underscore the conflicts both external and internal. Some of the villains were given more shades of gray to their motives and morality, such as the excellent, tragic Mr. Freeze character. He found himself at odds with Batman not because he wanted to commit a crime, but he was willing to do so to help his dying wife. These are complex motivations that were never explored in the past cartoons where morality was black and white and were used to present lessons in a simplistic manner. There was also much more examination of the psychology of Bruce and Batman.

The animation was phenomenal. While still not quite full frame rate, this was the first real attempt at a high-quality cartoon in the mold of the 40s Superman. The presentation is smooth and motion, proportion and things like scaling/zooming are all handled extremely well. Overall the consistency was very solid, with just a few dodgy episodes due to one animation house cutting corners too much.

The design aesthetic hewed closely to the Tim Burton Batman movies, filled with an art deco and film noir inspired look mixed with some modern touches which yielded its own distinctive vision and echoed 30s and 40s crime noir movies. The primary source of the visual style of the show came from Eric Radomski, whose unique production process and eye for design gave the Gotham in this show a gothic post-modern feel. Character designs were handled primarily Bruce Timm. The show jettisoned traditional neo-realistic depictions of the human form over a more stylized and angular perspective. This helped simplify the animation, allowing more work to be put into the fluidity of motion, as well as create a unique visual vocabulary all its own. For the musical score Danny Elfman was tapped and, after

initially turning the job down, produced a rousing variation of his *Batman* movie theme and was used on the first 65 episodes. A "second season" of an additional 20 episodes was produced with a theme song composed by Shirley Walker. Many other composers worked on various aspects of the in-episode sound design, which was a another highly lauded aspect of the series.

Harley's Relationship Is No Joke

Where the series excelled the most was in its cast of characters and the actors who voiced them. Kevin Conroy was chosen to voice Bruce Wayne/Batman, and he was so compelling in the role that he has voiced the character on and off ever since. Striking just the right balance between the justice of Batman and a redefined Bruce Wayne, who is now more responsible and involved in Wayne Enterprises as well as being less of a careless playboy, Conroy imbues Batman with humanity and heroism, as well as internal conflict, adroitly juggling all of them to create the most well-defined and cohesive Batman yet. The cast is a whos-who of TV and movie actors who rarely do animation, at least at this point. Ed Asner, John Glover, Paul Williams, Roddy McDowall, Michael Ansara, Marc Singer, Henry Silva, Ron Perlman, Kate Mulgrew, Helen Slater, Michael York, William Sanderson, Marilu Henner, Diana Muldaur, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr, Melissa Gilbert, and Adam West, among many others, all produced some of the best voice over work ever heard in super hero cartoons.

But the one that stood out over all the rest was the inspired casting of Mark Hamill as The Joker. Originally, Tim Curry was cast but after his recording sessions were deemed to menacing and scary, Hamill was brought in. Hamill's take on the Joker is psychotic and demented, with a heavy dose of comedic lunacy, which combine to create one of the most fun, and irresistible, versions of this classic character.

Several characters were created for the show, and some of them crossed back over into the comic books, and others that were revived and revised for the show would see their comic book versions altered to match their animated counterparts. The standout creation is Harley Quinn. Created by Paul Dini and Bruce Timm, originally the character just had a walk-on type role, but when audience reaction to her proved to be strong, she was utilized throughout the series.

Voiced originally by Arleen Sorkin, then later by Hynden Walch and Tara Strong, the character was modeled in part on the personality of Sorkin, who was a friend of Paul Dini. The character is a sidekick of sorts to the Joker, with twisted romantic overtones and a psychological dependency coupled with antisocial tendencies. Presumably, these were attributes created by Dini, and not borrowed from Sorkin.

The character would prove so popular, she would eventually be introduced in the comic *The Batman Adventures* and become a part of the DC universe proper, then one of her later comic stories was brought into the animated series as an episode. Her recent appearance, some would say show-stealing, in the film *Suicide Squad* may lead to her own solo film. She would eventually be teamed with Poison Ivy in one of the most entertaining episodes of the series. This would lead to pairing of the characters in the comics as well, continues to the present.

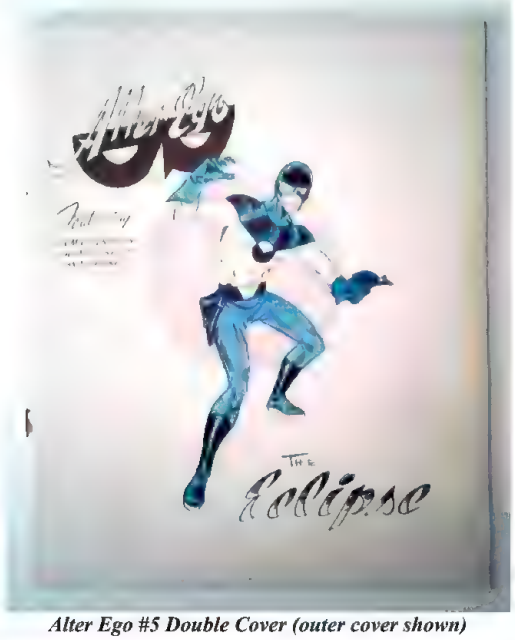
Much like its big-screen brothers that paved the way, *Batman: TAS* was a ground-breaking, fantastically faithful adaptation of one of the most difficult characters to get right in any medium. With its sophisticated and mature writing, and a more dark and serious tone aimed at a maturing audience, the show was a highly influential landmark at the crossroads of animation, comics and TV. It was so impactful that between this show and the movies, Batman would from this point forward carry the banner for all of DC outside of comics. Everything Batman would be highly anticipated and overtake Superman as DC's most relevant character well into the next millennium.

Harley and Ivy, A Most Dangerous Pair

Welcome back to Fanzine Corner! There have been some interesting discoveries along with some interesting market movements.

Price escalation on most of the regular pre-1970 material seems to have stabilized for now. Outliers can still spike some impressive prices, such as the recent sale of a Super Adventures #2, with the first complete Stephen King story, for $2025! The rest of the action seems to be with items selling in the $10-50 range. Many 70s and 80s fanzines are moving in this range now as collectors seek out more bang for the buck. This is having the knock-on effect of bringing more material to the market, increasing availability and even providing some examples of previously unknown fanzines.

An interesting discovery happened recently when Marty Hirchak bought a lot of fanzines which included an Alter-Ego #5 that had an odd double-cover. The outer cover was printed with a completely different color scheme than the inner cover, which was of the original edition. If appears to be a first printing with this outer cover added on. The strange thing is this 2nd cover is an offset printed cover that seems to have been attached the entire life of the book, as the staples are rusty from age, and this has stained the outer cover! It was posted in Marty's Fanzine Fantasy Facebook group, and no one seems to be able to say one way or the other just what it is. This may have been made by the publisher, possibly as a test cover, or a special variant, or who knows? It's one-of-a-kind, whatever it is. It's amazing that 50-odd years later, we are still discovering new and interesting fanzines and variants!



Alter Ego #5 Double Cover (outer cover shown)

Reported Fanzine Sales

Abyss #1 NM $55, ***Alter Ego V1, #3*** $200, ***#10*** F/VF $28, ***Amazing World of DC Comics #14*** VF $40, ***#16*** Fine $40, ***A Talk With Harvey Kurtzman*** VG $50, ***Collage #9*** (Corben) F-VF $25, ***Comic Art #3*** Fine $75, ***Comic Book Marketplace #5*** VF $30, ***Comic Book Marketplace #11*** F/VF $25, ***Comic Reader #42*** F/VF $35, ***#85*** F/VF $25, ***#126*** $25, ***#130*** Fine $10, ***#154*** VF- $8, ***#169*** VG+ $10, ***#179*** VG+ $10, ***Countdown #3*** VF $75, ***Ditkomania #24*** (2nd print) $10, ***Fantasy Fanzine #10*** $15, ***Fantasy Illustrated #1*** $42, ***#3*** $30, ***#4*** $46, ***#5*** $30, ***Fighting Hero Comics #10*** $40, ***Foom #5*** VG $11, ***#8*** Fine $10, ***#11*** VG $5, ***#12*** Fine $10, ***Giant Size Fan Thing #2*** Fine $75, ***Graphic Story Magazine #10*** F/VF $26, ***Graphic Story World #7*** VF $10, ***I'll Be Damned #1*** VF/NM $60, ***Infinity #3*** $35, ***Inside Comics #1*** VF/NM $20, ***#2*** F/VF $6, ***Marvelmania #1*** F/VF $50, ***Minotaur #14*** VF $31, ***Mr. A #1*** Fine $20, ***Odd #3*** $160, ***Omniverse #2*** Fine $14, ***On The Drawing Board #12*** $18, ***#14*** $18, ***#16*** Fine $18, ***Phantacea #1*** VG+ $10, ***Qua Brot #1*** VF $20, ***RBCC #23*** VG $135, ***#47*** VG $40, ***#48*** VF $40, ***#56*** VG/F $40, ***#93*** VG/F $20, ***#137*** G/VG $12, ***#138*** VF $10, ***#140*** VF $10, ***Sense of Wonder #12*** Fine $25, ***Shazam #3*** Fine $33, ***Squa Tront #1 (2nd print)*** $68, ***#2 (1st print)*** $35, ***#6*** VF/NM $10, ***Super Adventures #2*** (Stephen King story) $2025, ***#3*** $105, ***The Buyer's Guide to Comic Fandom #25*** $15, ***#45*** $25, ***The Comic World #8*** NM $10, ***The Jack Kirby Collector #1 (6th print)*** $12, ***The Panelologist Volume #2*** VG $18, ***Whizzard #14*** $10, ***Witzend #6*** F/VF $13, ***#7*** F/VF $35, ***Woweekazowie! #4*** VG/F $20

Jef Parker and the Beginning of Collector's Edge Comics (continued)

Chet's was a legendary store for the area, and many a budding Milwaukee comic collector made his initial forays at Chet's. The shop was a corner store in a building that still exists today. It sat across the street from a hobby shop and opposite it across KK (the local abbreviation for Kinnickinnic Avenue. No one but the most dedicated sadist ever fully pronounced it on a regular basis. It's pronounced "Kin-ick-in-ick") was a Magnavox store that sold TV's and early VCRs.

A sight familiar to many comic collectors in Milwaukee in the 70s - the intersection at Chet's Variety Store on KK. Chet's was in the small, brown corner store on the far right, now a music store. Virtually all of the buildings here are the originals from that time.

This was around 1980 and I know this because he showed me my first Overstreet after I had been going there a while, and it was the one with the black L. B. Cole cover, the 11th edition. It was then that I started to learn about prices and get exposed to the full range of comics that existed other than what I saw in Chet's bins. Chet's store was very small, and laid out very simply. There were 2 glass case displays forming an "L" at the back of the store, and a small back area behind that were he kept "the good stuff." In the middle of the store were bins built to the width of comic books. This was before comic boxes became vogue, so most bins of this era were custom-built and sectioned to fit comics. No bags or boards here either, making it difficult to find higher condition items.

Being a corner store, it had windows on each side, with a small ledge. The comics were unsorted and that is being kind. Not only unsorted in the bins, but literally in piles around the windows and in paper grocery bags all over. You had to *work* to find stuff at Chet's! This became The Hunt, and the feeling has stayed with me to this day whenever I browse anything unsorted. It helped me develop an eye for catching details quickly and being able to pick out and match things with minimal visual information. I used to be able to go through my Justice League's and be able to identify an issue just by seeing the top half inch or so. Chet also showed gave me my first look at a run of early 60s Green Lanterns when he had acquired a collection with most from #1 to about #70. I had never seen that much of the "old" stuff like that before, outside of a few random issues here and there that I managed to cull out of Chet's bins.

Chet's had a limited and eclectic selection. I found my first *X-Men* issue there after hearing about it from others. I managed to find them back to #144, the first post-Byrne issue. Since I was new to all this, trying to complete long runs was not feasible yet, and I fell into trying to complete other, smaller series like the 70s DC "implosion" type books: *Steel*, *Firestorm*, *Stalker*, *Karate Kid*, *Beowulf*, *Kobra*, *Secret Society of Super Villains*, and so forth. These were available and most importantly, affordable. Armed with these interests and the Overstreet to guide me, I started building my first collection.

So I bounced around between getting my new comics from Chet's and the newsstand (usually the hobby shop in Cudahay) but eventually these started to run dry, as Chet's was a random selection and the newsstands would add and drop titles all the time. But the big impetus was the introduction of direct sale titles. I collected *Moon Knight* and *Micronauts* at the time, and those went to direct sale in the same month. I was cut off, and needed a more reliable supply.

Chet had told me about a local comic con, a concept I was only vaguely starting to get familiar with at this time, and mentioned it was at a particular bar/bowling alley downtown, probably on Wisconsin Ave. Somehow I found out what the place was and went there by bus on the designated day, but when I arrived there was no show. Asking the employees there, they informed me that it was no longer being held there and had moved somewhere else, a place called The Burnham Bowl, which was on the other side of town. As I would find out later, they had just changed locations shortly before I tried to go, so I missed the original location by no more than a month or so.

A closer look at Chet's storefront from a few years back. While considered to be in "Milwaukee," this location is actually in a community called Bay View.

How To Get Around Milwaukee When You Are 12 Years Old

So a word about getting around Milwaukee. Milwaukee is a big town, very spread out. I lived on the south side and the Bowl was in West Allis, one of the may suburbs. My usual mode for getting around, besides walking, was to take my bike for trips within a mile or two, but depending on security of my bike a the destination or for further trips, it was public transit or bust. Milwaukee had a pretty famous fleet of busses, at one time colored orange, but by this time they were green or blue. Most of them were from the late 60s or early 70s designs with the pull-cable to ring the bell for

stops, but sometimes you could get on one of the newer ones that had a rubber strip running along the seats that you would push on to alert the driver. The contacts under this strip didn't run the entire length, so sometimes you had to try at different spots along the strip to get a good "ding!" out of them. Missed a few stops trying to find the right spot to ring the bell.

The hall entrance to the Burnham Bowl.

They used a paper transfer system in those days, where the driver would have a pad of tickets, each had a different color for each day, which was held in place on a stem with hinged crossbar with a tight spring to hold it down on the paper. The tickets had times of the day by the hour written down the length. As the day would wear on, the driver would slide the pad down, exposing a later time. It was a dice roll if you would get a bus with a favorable transfer time. You would hope he had adjusted the pad to a later time just before you got on. The Milwaukee buses were clean, safe and convenient. In over 100 years of service there has only been one killing, an accidental one during a shootout of gang members in 2005. Amazingly, this

The hall as seen from the entrance.

paper transfer system was only just phased out in January of this year (2016). The Burnham Bowl was about 6 miles from me on 60th and Burnham Avenue, so the bus it was.

The Burnham Bowl Comic Show

The Burnham Bowl comic show was started in 1977 by Jef Parker and Ron Killian and had a couple of locations prior to settling at the Bowl. It ran on the first Sunday of every month, or every other month, and is still going to this day. It is the longest continuously running comic show in Wisconsin. It takes place in a hall next to the bowling alley, a small room by con standards but to my young eyes it was a huge wealth of comics I had only heard of but never seen. Even better, the first table on the right when you enter the room, the one next to the bar, was filled with 1-2 month old current comics! Here I would find my direct sale only titles and more that Chet's or the newsstand missed. The room was shabby with dark walls and cloth hanging down from the ceiling, and it has always been a dim room, but we didn't care because it gave us access to a plethora of back issues. It was here that I was able to fill out nearly my entire JLA series. In the end, I had every issue except #1, 9 and the B&B issues. Not bad for 15 year old kid. I ended up walking home a couple of times because the busses took too long to wait for, and in one case I had spent all my money.

The hall from the far end. (The pictures presented here are lightened considerably in order to show detail. The actual room is much dimmer)

The Bowl holds a lot of memories of a great time in my life, when I really got the chance to expand my collection and my knowledge of comics and how to collect. Nowadays the Bowl show is home to mostly dollar bins and casual collecting, but back in the day it was the source for silver-age-and-later material.

As for Chet's, I continued to go there for a while but with the greater selection from dealers from the Bowl and a new comic shop that opened up closer to me, I graduated, like many of us did, to more sophisticated avenues than Chet's had to offer. I only went back a few times after that.

Chet died in 1998 at 72 years of age. He was a well-known figure in the community of Bay View. I don't know if he ever realized how well he was appreciated by the comics community, or that he would be remembered so fondly after all these years.

Up to this point, I had not yet met Jef Parker nor knew that he ran the Bowl show. That would change in a couple of years when Excalibur Comics opened and brought the destinies of many people together.

(Burnham Bowl images courtesy of oldmilwaukee6er *from the Collector's Society board. Used with permission.)*

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